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* The "Plea for the Middle Classes" was the document which led to the foundation of the large groups of "Woodard Schools" which now (1884) include 3 in Sussex (Lancing, Hove & Brighton) 1 in Staffs. (Derby) 1 in Shropsh. (Ellesmere, dependent on Derby) 1 in Somerset. (Taunton) & 1 I think in Yorkshire. J.G.T.

> The "Plea for the Middle Classes" (1884) Rev. H. Woodard.

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THE RECOVERY OF THE LOST SHEEP OF THE CHURCH OF
ENGLAND BY HOME MISSIONS IN HER LARGE
AND DESTITUTE PARISHES.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

OPENING OF THE MISSION CHAPEL,

CALVERT STREET, S. GEORGE'S, EAST,

ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1856.

BY THE

REV. BRYAN KING, M.A.,

RECTOR OF THE PARISH, AND LATE FELLOW OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

“The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.”

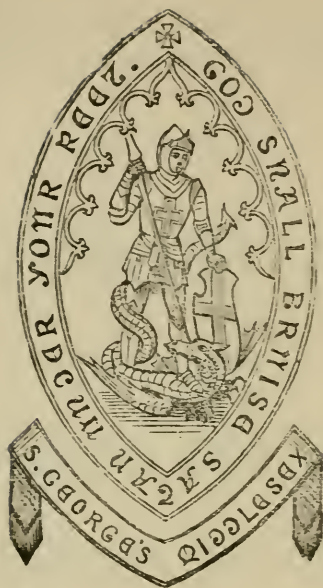
LONDON :

JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET,

AND NEW BOND STREET.

OXFORD: J. H. AND J. PARKER. CAMBRIDGE: E. LUMLEY, JUN.

DERBY: MOZLEYS.



TO

HIS SPIRITUAL MOTHER,

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

IN THE FULL BELIEF OF HER ABILITY,

THROUGH THE DIVINE PRESENCE WITHIN HER,

TO COMBAT ALL THE MANIFOLD EVILS OF THIS GENERATION,

THIS SERMON

IS DEDICATED,

BY ONE THAT IS NOT WORTHY TO BE CALLED HER SON.

B. K.

P R E F A C E.

It is with considerable misgivings that I commit the following sermon to the press; it was prepared for those who had assisted in setting on foot the "S. George's Church Mission;" and the *personal revelations* contained in it were made to them out of the fulness of a heart which they had been made the means of relieving in its bitterness. The publication of it however, has been requested by several of those brother Clergymen by whom the mission was originated, in the hope that it might be the means of promoting the cause of such missions; and the reader of the sermon will easily understand why I should not feel at liberty to disregard any request emanating from such a quarter. I can only say that I shall not regret the publication, if the personal revelations in question should be the means, under Divine grace, of helping any one sorrowing brother or sister in the Church "patiently to endure," in the humble trust that the LORD of mercy will in

His good time give “the heart’s desires” unto them that “wait patiently” upon Him.

On the *general* purport of the following sermon I may say thus much : I have now had the spiritual charge of poor and populous districts in this part of London for nearly twenty years ; for five years in the parish of Bethnal Green (where I was permitted to take part in promoting “the Bethnal Green churches” scheme), and subsequently in this parish : and all my experience has convinced me that this measure of establishing Church Missions in our large and destitute parishes is *the only one* to which we can look for success in our work. It did not fall within my scope in this sermon to point out the circumstance that this measure fully provides for *the unity of the Church* in her parishes. The ecclesiastical position of the Clergymen of such missions, is that of “assistant Curates of the parish church ;” so that, however the number of such Clergymen may be increased, “the curate,” in whom is vested the paramount cure of souls of the parish, constitutes the centre of unity, and ensures its preservation in the combined action of all his brother Curates ; and this is strictly in accordance with the fundamental constitution of the Church in her parochial distribution. By that constitution it is *no more possible* that there should be two independent Priests in the same parish, than that there should be two independent Bishops in the same diocese. There may be *suffragan Bishops* in the one case, as there may be *assistant Priests* in

the other ; but any other organisation than this is utterly destructive of unity.

This fundamental principle of the Church in her parishes seems to have been entirely lost sight of in most modern schemes for Church extension. And whilst the Church, through her Bishops, has given, by the solemn act of institution, "the cure of the souls of a parish" to one Priest ; the State, through certain Church Building Acts, has given (or has *affected* to give) "exclusive cure of souls" of parts of such parish to other Priests.

Happily we are beginning to discover that the erection of District Churches is a very *expensive* method of multiplying Clergymen in our overgrown parishes ; and further that this Parliamentary expedient of planting district churches, with their one or two isolated Clergymen, in our populous parishes, fails to carry out the Church's great work with the force and concentration of purpose which is insured by an united body of Clergymen acting in one combined system.¹

It will be well if such discovery leads us to return to the "more excellent way" of the Church herself in this matter. Of course it is most desirable that the establishment of Church Missions in our populous parishes should eventually lead to the constitution

¹ See a sensible article on "Church Building" in the Quarterly Review for September, 1856 ; and also some late correspondence on the same subject in the "Times," and other newspapers.

of *distinct and separate parishes* ;¹ but between the alternatives of such distinct and separate parishes, and mere mission chapels or chapels of ease under the Mother Church, there is, I am sure, no safe course, as there is no course which does not fatally imperil the Church's unity.

BRYAN KING.

RECTORY, S. GEORGE'S, EAST,
Advent, 1856.

¹ I presume that the only *canonical* method in which a parish can be subdivided, is by the Incumbent resigning his cure of souls of a part of it into the hands of his Bishop, and then by the Bishop conferring that cure upon "the Curate" (be he Rector, Vicar, or Perpetual Curate) of the newly-formed parish. Is it too much to hope that some yet "Amended Church Building Act" of some new "Church Reformer" may provide for such canonical subdivision?

A S E R M O N.

Ps. CXIII. 9.

“HE MAKETH THE BARREN WOMAN TO KEEP HOUSE, AND TO BE A JOYFUL MOTHER OF CHILDREN. PRAISE YE THE LORD.”

I SUPPOSE that all who have been exposed to any severe trial or sorrow, of long duration, have been in the habit of fastening their souls (so to speak) upon certain promises of God in Holy Scripture,—upon certain classes of texts ; of striving and struggling, in face of all discouragements, to rest their weariness upon them ; of striving to bring their poor, storm-tossed souls to hold fast by such promises, as though upon a “sure anchor,” when “the deep water-floods” have gone nigh to overwhelm them. And perhaps many a heart of my brother Priests and Pastors has so rested, or *tried* to rest, upon this very promise of the text, or upon some similar one, when their hearts have died down within them, in

deep sorrow and shame, at thought of the sad state of those poor wandering sheep, over the which CHRIST JESUS has made them overseers.

Perhaps many such have often taken fast hold of such most gracious promise, and thought to themselves, "Though this poor, lost flock, for whose welfare I must give account, is all wandering far from the SAVIOUR'S fold,—though I cannot gather it again,—nay, though I cannot win even *one solitary wanderer* back again to its fold, yet here still is that SAVIOUR'S most gracious, most precious promise: I will hold me fast by it still, even though, to my poor, broken heart, I seem to have no claim upon its fulfilment whatever."

Nay, further, I suppose that *all* earnest hearts in the Church have often hailed with hope such precious promises as this of the text, and hung upon them earnestly, when they have seen or thought of the large masses of practical heathenism of our manufacturing or commercial towns, which the Church of the Redeemer has scarcely seemed to leaven at all, nay, scarcely seemed *to care for*.

I suppose that all earnest hearts in the Church have often seen, with grief and contrition, that as yet that Church has failed to regain any effective hold upon the masses of our poorer populations; that such classes of our populations are wont to look upon the Church and her ministrations as something quite alien from their own interests,—as some strange thing with which they have no con-

cern. I suppose that all such earnest hearts have often clung, or wished to cling, to such promises as this of the text, in such their distress and perplexity, in the dim hope and trust that the Church which has inherited them from her SAVIOUR JESUS would one day claim and make such glorious bequest her own. I suppose that all such have earnestly gazed forward to watch the dawning of that time, to watch every slightest indication and sign of its "beginning to come to pass."

And, doubtless, all such hearts have hailed, with deep thankfulness, all the earnest efforts which have been made by the Church within the last few years, to win back to CHRIST the souls of her own poor, lost wanderers,—all the efforts which have tended to vindicate her high claim of true lineage from that most gentle and loving One, Who "hath not despised the low estate of the poor."

Many amongst us have made some poor efforts in this direction in past years; we have tried somewhat; it may be that we have made trial after trial to win back the lost poor into the fold of CHRIST'S Church: but we have failed perhaps, and we have seen others fail. But then (blessed be the Name of God Most High) such failures as these have not sufficed entirely to quench the smoking flax of our frail hopes. There are many and many hearts,—nay, there are *more and more* hearts,—day by day, which know and trust, with an ever firmer and deeper conviction, that the promise of CHRIST JESUS

to be with His Church to the end of the world, is still in force in all its infinite fulness; that in virtue of that Almighty promise there is no earthly impossibility whatever which the Church has not the might to compass and to accomplish.

And I trust that I may say that, after the comparative failure of past endeavours to gather the estranged poor within the fold of the Church, it was some little of such faith in CHRIST's own promise which led to that effort to win the poorer members of a large and destitute parish to their Redeemer*, upon which we are assembled in this chapel to pray God's blessing to-day.

Now I know not of any single parish anywhere, in which the poorer class was for so long a time so utterly uncared for by the Church as it was in this. When this parish was first constituted, and its Church consecrated, now nearly one hundred and thirty years ago, its population consisted of *several* thousand souls; and, as is apparent from a contemporaneous authority,¹ a great proportion, nay,

¹ This parish was originally the hamlet of Wapping-Stepney, in the parish of S. Dunstan, Stepney; and was constituted a distinct parish upon the consecration of its Church and the institution of a Rector, by 2nd George II. cap. 30. A Committee of the House of Commons received evidence, February 19, 1728, from some of the inhabitants of the hamlet, (in support of a petition of the churchwarden, constable, overseers, &c., presented February 12, 1728,) to the effect that "the parish church" (of S. Dunstan, Stepney,) "was not able to hold *one fiftieth part of the inhabitants of the parish*;" that there

in all likelihood, by *far the greater* proportion, of those souls were of the poorer classes. But, notwithstanding this, the only provision made in the church for the poor—for the many thousand parishioners who were not ratepayers—was some very inconvenient sittings for about *fifty people*, over and above the accommodation for the comparatively few children of the then parochial schools. It was only some thirty years ago, when the number of poor in the parish amounted to *some tens of thousands*, that some more commodious sittings were substituted for the former, affording accommodation to about *ninety persons*.

Now surely it is an *appalling reflection*, to think that all through those hundred years, if ever the grace of CHRIST JESUS had led any number of the many thousands of poorer parishioners to seek for their SAVIOUR's pardon and pity in His sanctuary,—to think, I say, then, that the very arrangements of the Church should testify, in effect, to such poor souls, and say, “This is no place for you; you are outcasts here; for the loss of *your* worthless souls the Church has no care.”

And then only to think that this parish was in this respect but *a specimen* (we may indeed trust an

was “no chapel or tabernacle in the hamlet,” that “there were upwards of 2,500 houses” (representing at least 17,000 inhabitants) “in the said hamlet,” and that “the poor were numerous.” Journal of the House of Commons, 19 Februarii, 1728.

exaggerated one,) of many and many other parishes, both in this city and elsewhere.

The spirit of worldliness indeed had fearfully pervaded the Church of the Redeemer. The Church scarcely seemed even to *see* her own neglect of the poor, or to be conscious at all of her duty towards them. At best she made faltering appeals to *the authorities of the State*, to provide the Gospel for her own outcasts. She never seemed to dream that *this* was her own first and paramount responsibility. She had not yet discovered the secret of her own strength and ability to discharge this responsibility. She had not yet discovered the vast, the *inexhaustible* treasures of wealth, better far than the revenues of empires, which she possessed within herself, *in the devotion and the self-denial of her own children*.

Oh, what a sad and dreary retrospect have we in that age of the Church's utter disregard for the souls of those poor, which, if she be true to her SAVIOUR at all, must ever be her first and chiefest care.

If we marvel (as well indeed we may) how after such utter disregard by the Church for those of her poor children, who most required her care, there should remain among our poor any regard at all for the Church's ministrations, even in the more eventful incidents of their own lives or in those of their children,—how there should remain in their hearts any regard at all (as indeed there is still a deep one) for the Church's Pastors and Ministers ; then per-

haps we may say that this has been through the special mercy of that Heavenly FATHER, Who for His own purposes of mercy and grace towards them, often preserves in the hearts of children an instinctive reverence and regard for those parents, whose unnatural conduct has yet seemed entirely to forfeit all claim upon their allegiance.

And if again we marvel how any merely *human restraints* sufficed, in the absence of almost all *Divine*, to preserve those tens of thousands of uncared for poor of our crowded towns from the commission of excesses and outrages the most monstrous and foul ; then perhaps we may say, that they were preserved by the immediate care of GOD their SAVIOUR, through His own discipline of *poverty* ;—that, when His Church virtually abrogated her high functions towards His poor, then He in His boundless mercies took care that they should not be sunk in *deepest destruction*, but “refrained their souls and kept them low” by His own blessed discipline. And so that wide-spread and ever-growing pauperism in this country, which some years ago made Statesmen to stand aghast with dismay, as though at some terrible blight and curse, which seemed doomed to devour the land, was in fact, though a heavy judgment upon a Church’s and nation’s neglect, yet still (as regards the special objects of the visitation) *a great and inconceivable blessing* at the hands of Almighty God.

But then (blessed be His holy Name), when the

threatening evils of that ever-spreading pauperism excited the apprehensions of statesmen, and called for their legislative interference, it excited too the sympathies of many and many earnest hearts in *the Church*, who saw that the gigantic evil was beyond the cure of merely *parliamentary* remedies. And the first efforts of such earnest hearts were directed to provide a religious education for *the children* of those poor lost ones, who in their seething masses of thousands were living almost utterly uncared for around them. Accordingly they procured the erection of large schools in many of our most populous parishes; and doubtless Almighty God has not withheld His grace and blessing from this their pious care. Yet still those who were amongst the most active and earnest in this good work, failed to reap all the religious fruit from their labours which they had looked and hoped for. And we who have in a degree succeeded to their labours, have now seen and learnt that something beyond the mere perfunctory imparting of religious knowledge to large masses of children through an almost mechanical agency of a master and schoolboy monitors, is required, *in order to win and rivet all a child's ardent heart and love to the service of his Saviour.*

Then after the experiment of such schools had been tried, the earnest hearts of those whom CHRIST had awakened in His Church, made noble efforts for the erection of *Churches* in such large and neglected parishes as this.

They thought that thus to plant a Clergyman with his church and schools in the midst of a spiritual wilderness, was indeed to apply the true Gospel leaven of their Redeemer to the mass of human corruption, was indeed the sure method by which to obtain God's blessing upon their work.

And doubtless so it was ; doubtless He has not withheld His special blessing from this their Christian zeal. But then we that have been permitted to take any part in this work of Church building, have found, that even the planting of a Church in such neighbourhoods as this has failed to make any adequate impression upon the character and habits of the neglected poor around it. And now we have found out *the reason* of our failure ; we have found out, that for us to expect that the souls of those untaught poor, who have never been in the habit of sharing in the act of public worship in their lives, who have never perhaps addressed themselves to their God and SAVIOUR in private prayer of more than *two or three minutes' duration*,—that for us to expect such poor untaught souls all at once, at the mere sight of a material Church, to be ready to appreciate and take part in its long and elaborate services of hours' duration, is (merely in the aspect of it as *an intellectual exercise*) as though we were to expect a young child or even infant, all at once to master and to appreciate some abstruse problem of science at the mere sight of the mathematical formula.

We have found that the main object and purpose of the parochial church is to be the place of offering up to the Almighty the high service of His people's adoration ; that under that their highest office, the main work and duty of the Clergy of such churches is to teach and edify the hearts of those who are *already in the position of instructed Christians*. We have found that side by side with these parochial Clergymen, and as complementing their work, other Clergymen¹ are needed of almost distinct functions, living amongst the masses of the neglected population of our parishes, whose main care and object it must be to awaken consciences that are dead in trespasses and sins ;—to arouse souls to a care for eternity, to whom religion is an utterly strange thing ;—in the fullest sense of the word, by God's mighty grace to *convert* the dull and hardened hearts of aliens, that they may become babes in CHRIST JESUS ;—to feed those babes one by one with the pure milk of CHRIST's ever blessed truth ;—in one word, by patient missionary labour to seek after and find one poor straying soul after another ;—to tend it, and shelter and succour it with all a shep-

¹ "Our measures in all such cases are taken as if those who have been a prey to spiritual destitution would flock as eagerly to receive the Bread of Life as a famished mob to a distribution of wheaten loaves. But, alas! they have lost all appetite. They must be sought out—they must be won—they must be 'compelled' to come in." Quart. Rev. Art. "Church Building," Sept. 1856.

herd's watchful care, that so at length, through the endless love and grace which flows ever from the heart of the One all tender, loving Shepherd, it may be safely housed in His holy fold.

This then, in a word, is the object and design of the Christian mission upon which we meet to call down the special grace and blessing of the Great Head of the Church to-day.

He has taught some earnest hearts to be willing and to be glad to give up themselves to His service in this work of seeking for His lost poor, to live *amongst* the poor, and to live *as* the poor. He has seemed to give us already *great, very great* help and encouragement in this work, and has turned the hearts of many of His people to help and cheer us onward by their hearty sympathy and aid. Nay, He has seemed even by a recent Act of Civil Legislation¹ (the effect of which we little thought of at the time of its passing) to further our design, by enabling us to use such Mission Chapels as this, for the purpose of such short and informal religious services as the spiritual needs and temporal leisure of the people may seem to require. He has given, (I trust that I may say) to all of us, His Priests and servants who are engaged in this work, the most entire mutual confidence and brotherly affection. And

¹ Lord Shaftesbury's Act (18th and 19th Victoria, cap. 86,) which repeals certain penalties previously imposed by the Legislature upon the exercise of Religious Worship in other than certain certified Buildings.

He has given to us the warm and earnest sympathy of our spiritual heads and fathers. Almost *the very last act* done by the authority of our late Bishop,—that Bishop, the high and noble energies of whose life were all devoted with a singleness of purpose worthy the greatest even of his predecessors in this See, to the setting forward the Redeemer's kingdom ;—I say almost the very last act done by his authority was the investment of one of our body with his spiritual mission for this work. Whilst the *very first act* of our present Bishop, after the day of his consecration, was to give us the assurance of his most warm and earnest sympathy in our work, mingled indeed (as I am sure we all feel to be most fitting) with words of most gentle and fatherly counsel and admonition, reminding us of our constant need of watchful and jealous caution lest we should mar by our frailty this high work, this eventful experiment which we are trying in the Church of our Redeemer.

Such then is shortly the nature of this work, and such the circumstances under which it is being commenced.

But now, as the greater number of you, my brethren beloved in CHRIST JESUS, have shown deep interest in this work from the first, it is only meet that you should learn the circumstances which have led to its being commenced *here in this Parish*.

It is then now more than fourteen years (the period of Jacob's double apprenticeship of dreary

toil and trial, ere he was permitted to found in the twelve Patriarchs the Church of Israel after the flesh,) since a priest and pastor was entrusted with the cure of the souls of this vast parish. For several years of his ministry here, he was (and *that* certainly through his own most manifold frailties, infirmities, and sins,) the object of almost universal suspicion and distrust amongst his people; then further, he was, as it were, utterly paralyzed in the very vastness of his charge; his own feeble and almost unaided efforts in his overwhelming field of labour seemed to be all futile and vain; he could find no means of obtaining such help in his work as he needed; “fast bound in misery and iron,” he was but as it were a lone, and alas, *a most unvigilant* sentry here; as a solitary “lodge in a garden of cucumbers,” as “a besieged city” indeed; he saw the tens of thousands for whose souls he must give account, perishing unregarded; he could do absolutely nothing himself for them; whilst he was constrained at the same time to decline availing himself of some offered help which did not seem to him to be in accordance with the ordinance of CHRIST JESUS in His church. So that he could only look upon himself as a mere obstacle and hindrance in the way of the salvation of his poor people’s souls; he could only earnestly pray and entreat in deep distress of soul, day by day, and that for several weary years, that it might please His SAVIOUR to remove him as a mere stumbling block and offence, from this part of the vineyard

which He had purchased with His all precious Blood :—until at the season of last Epiphany, when the Church gives her children those lessons replete with such amazing promises of the manifestation of His presence, which GOD has in store for His Church, when “the LORD shall be unto her an everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended,” and when “Her waste and her desolate places, and the land of her destruction shall even be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants.”¹ Then, it pleased CHRIST JESUS in His endless pity and love, to revive the heart of His most helpless and most unworthy servant with the hope that the times of refreshing might even yet come upon him, and his “bootless darkling toil ;” when even *he* might be able in praise to say, “He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children : praise ye the LORD.”

And then came to him the startling tidings, tidings almost too much for his long-deferred, heart-sick hope to receive, that a band of clergymen interested in promoting home missions amongst our vast and neglected populations, were looking out for a suitable sphere in this part of London, in which to begin their work.

And so the very longings of many dreary years of that lost pastor were realized ; the very instru-

¹ Isa. lx. 20, and Isa. xlix. 19. The proper Lessons for the Feast of Epiphany ; and so throughout the proper Lessons for the Season.

mentality to which alone he had for years looked with any hope of success in his work was at once placed within his reach.

This then, my dear brethren, is the work which you have helped to set on foot ; this is the work upon which you are assembled here to-day to pray and entreat, in the offering up of CHRIST's most holy Eucharist, GOD's special blessing.

We hope by GOD's blessing gradually to extend our work ; to open additional mission houses (and already another chapel is being taken for the purpose,) as centres of this work in the other destitute places of this parish ; nay, we hope that eventually our mission here may originate (if it be GOD's will) as it were *a School of home Missions* within the Church of England ; that so the spiritual needs of *other* parishes may be eventually supplied, and that through such agency, they that follow us may be able to look to the present waste places of the Church, and say with thankfulness, " He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children : praise ye the LORD."

But oh, my brethren, how shall I tell you, how shall I impress upon you, the depth of *our conscious need of your prayers and intercessions for us ?*

We are embarked in a great work, pregnant, as we believe, with the most momentous consequences to the Church of CHRIST in this land ; and all may be hindered, all may be marred utterly, by our

faults and misdoings, by our unfaithfulness, our frailties, our indiscretions.

How then shall I entreat and conjure you, my brethren, to help us in this work by your prayers.

We who have the conduct of this high work can do *absolutely nothing* in its furtherance, we can do absolutely nothing of ourselves but *in its hindrance and undoing*.

Oh, then, brethren, pray for us ;—pray for us constantly ;—pray for us now especially in our high service and Eucharist :—and then indeed God our SAVIOUR will accomplish His most merciful purposes in us and through us, all unworthy of His mercy as we are.

But yet I would ask and intreat for the discharge of a duty in this matter, even *of prior*, if not of paramount importance to prayer, and that is, of *penitent confession* of our grievous shortcomings in times past with respect to the poor.

“There is an awe in mortal’s joy,
A deep mysterious fear
Half of the heart will still employ.”

And well perhaps is it that it ever should be so with us, else our joy would scarcely be such as becomes us upon *earth*.

And so even in this glad hour we have much, very much to confess in deepest humility for the sad and sinful neglect of our fathers in the Church before us, and of ourselves, in our disregard of CHRIST’S

poor lost ones, before we may presume to pray for God's mercy to be shown upon our work.

For in the mysterious dispensation of our heavenly FATHER, which flows perhaps out of the imputation upon us of the first Adam's guilt, and again of the Second Adam's "far more abounding" righteousness, we are in a mysterious measure answerable for the sins and shortcomings of our forefathers in the Church, as well as for our own. The Church gives us a deep religious lesson when in the very first petition of her Litany she leads us to pray, "Remember not, LORD, our offences, *nor the offences of our forefathers.*" And so it was when holy Daniel confessed unto the Most High the sins of himself, of his people, and of *their fathers* (Dan. ix. 8), that the Almighty sent to him His Angel with messages of mercy and deliverance,—mercy and deliverance the greatest of all, in the tidings of the MESSIAH.

So now, brethren, both we and our fathers in the Church have deeply sinned against our SAVIOUR by disregard of His poor lost ones! Before then we presume to pray for His blessing upon this work in the celebration of CHRIST's high mysteries,—before we presume to offer Him our alms for the furtherance of this His work, I would suggest that we should, each by himself, offer up to the throne of God Most High, the penitential confession of our sins, and of the sins of our forefathers in the Church in this matter.

Perhaps many of us will feel that the most appropriate form in which we can offer up such confession, is in the language of the fifty-first Psalm, that Psalm, in which we may pray to be delivered from *blood-guiltiness*,—the guiltiness of the blood of *murdered souls*.

And now unto GOD the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, the alone Author, Perfecter, and Finisher of every good work, be ascribed, &c., &c.

(The sermon ended, all in the chapel knelt meekly upon their knees, and silence was kept for a space.)

